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FM AMEMBASSY TASHKENT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0444
INFO RUEHZG/NATO EU COLLECTIVE
RUEHAB/AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT 4414
RUEHTA/AMEMBASSY ASTANA 0630
RUEHEK/AMEMBASSY BISHKEK 5031
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 0891
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 0618
RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE 0910
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 4628
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 2919
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 0930
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 7634
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 1578
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RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC 0475
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 2863
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC 0327
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0394
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 2063
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1523
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C O N F I D E N T I A L TASHKENT 001218

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/CEN, EXBS FOR J. HARTSHORN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/21/2018

TAGS: [PBTS](#) [ASEC](#) [PREL](#) [UZ](#)

SUBJECT: UZBEKISTAN: CUSTOMS REQUESTS TECHNICAL EQUIPMENT
FROM THE UNITED STATES

REF: A. TASHKENT 1193

[¶](#)B. TASHKENT 518

[¶](#)C. TASHKENT 661

Classified By: Poloff Steven Prohaska for reasons 1.4 (b, d).

[¶](#)1. (C) Summary: On September 30, Poloff and Deskoff met with Customs representatives who described the agency's priorities and expressed appreciation for U.S.-provided border security assistance. Customs appears to be particularly interested in receiving additional technical equipment that would help it to detect narcotics and radioactive materials. Interestingly, Customs now appears to be providing training opportunities to counterparts in other countries in the region, including Afghanistan. End summary.

Customs Outlines Priorities

[¶](#)2. (C) On September 30, Poloff and Deskoff met with several officials from Uzbekistan's State Customs Committee, including Col. Sharifjon Karimovich Egenberdiev, Chief of the Main Department for Counter-Smuggling, and Bakhodir Yunusov, Chief of the International Cooperation Department. Egenberdiev said that Customs' priorities include combating the smuggling of narcotics and weapons; reacting to threats in a timely fashion; ensuring the security of Uzbekistan's borders; improving the technological sophistication of Customs, particularly with regard to information technology; outfitting border crossing points with modern equipment; and prohibiting the transit of harmful substances and dual-use technologies.

[¶](#)3. (C) The Customs officials expressed thanks for roughly 8.7 million USD in assistance from the U.S. between 2001 and 2006, and said that more than 100 Customs officers have

received U.S.-provided countersmuggling training. They were particularly grateful for U.S.-provided radiation portal monitors, and noted that Uzbekistan has interdicted radioactive materials on at least five occasions since 2000 (three on the Uzbekistan-Kazakhstan border and two on the Uzbekistan-Kyrgyzstan border).

Give Us Modern Equipment

¶ 14. (C) Yunusov asked that the United States consider providing Customs with additional equipment that would help it to detect narcotics and radioactive materials, and offered to send a list of requested equipment to the Embassy if the U.S. is interested. Yunusov stated that Customs also has participated in many Asian Development Bank (ADB)-sponsored seminars recently, but still lacks sufficient equipment at border crossing points.

¶ 15. (C) Egenberdiev said that he himself has visited the United States, and praised the expertise of U.S. counterparts. "We also have very smart officers. We've already received training from the U.S., United Nations, and other organizations," he said. Echoing Yunusov's sentiments, he stated that the real priority, however, is acquiring the equipment necessary to improve Customs' work, but noted that this is only his personal view. "Training and seminars are good, of course. But providing technical equipment will increase the effectiveness of our activity many times."

Providing Training to Neighbors

¶ 16. (C) Egenberdiev proudly remarked that the Higher Military Customs Institute that opened in 2003 has already graduated two classes of well-trained officers. Moreover, Customs' National Canine Training Center has become a regional center for the World Customs Organization, and has begun training officials from Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Iran, Mongolia, and Turkmenistan. (Note: It is interesting to note that Customs appears to have taken our June suggestion (reftel C) to provide training to Afghan counterparts on board.)

Lukewarm View of International Organizations

¶ 17. (C) Yunusov noted that Customs cooperates with the ADB, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and China's Customs service, but complained that cooperation with these so far has largely consisted of talks and negotiations. He expressed concern about the narcotics situation in Afghanistan, stating that while these organizations are thinking, drug traffickers are not waiting. Customs works with fourteen foreign countries and participates in eight international programs under the United Nations Development Program, Yunusov continued. Customs also has an agreement with France on precursors control and canine training.

Comment:

¶ 18. (C) While Customs has been appreciative of U.S.-provided assistance, the remarks of these officials suggest that some in the Government of Uzbekistan are more enthused about receiving technical equipment, rather than general training, from the United States. (Of course, equipment-specific training would still be necessary for the GOU to utilize the equipment appropriately.) Several factors could be at play here. First, given that many organizations and other states appear to provide more training opportunities than equipment to Uzbekistan, these officials may be hoping that the United States can address some of Tashkent's needs that are harder to fulfill. Second, some might still be afraid of possible repercussions from being perceived as too pro-Western and having been "tainted" by exposure to Western ideals--equipment would thus be a safer way to receive border security assistance. Third, Customs officials may still be

smarting from an apparent punishment from more powerful forces in the GOU for directly engaging with the Embassy (vice through MFA) on a recent International Narcotics and Law Enforcement training program (reftel A).

¶9. (C) Some Customs facilities probably are truly underequipped, as some deliverables from years past have reached the end of their service lives. In contrast to several years ago, when Customs officials in Nukus noted that they had no equipment shortfalls, these officials recently asked us for additional communications equipment because they had lost their ability to interact with people in the field. Other recently requested assistance includes training specifically geared toward maintenance of an EXBS-provided van (reftel B).

NORLAND